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UNCLAS BOGOTA 009001

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR IO/UNESCO JANE COWLEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COLOMBIA IN NO HURRY TO APPROVE UNESCO CULTURAL CONVENTION

REF: STATE 170909

1. (U) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to newly-arrived Colombian Coordinator for UNESCO in MFA's Multilateral Affairs office, Ambassador Carlos Gamba, on September 22. Poloff stressed U.S. concerns regarding the draft Convention's potential for misinterpretation and encouraged the GOC to work with others to create a true consensus draft. Poloff also emphasized that there should be no hurry to approve the draft Convention during the three-week UNESCO General Conference in October.

2. (U) According to Gamba, who took up his post two weeks ago, the GOC is in favor of the Convention, but is in no hurry to act on it in October. Gamba said the GOC's goal was to sign the Convention within the next two years. He agreed that there was still much negotiating to be done, but was hopeful that consensus could be reached during the General Conference. Gamba said that his office, working with the Ministry of Culture, would write the instructions for the Colombian Mission to UNESCO. He plans to participate in the General Conference as well. Gamba asked for any specific alternative language the U.S. proposes.

3. (SBU) Comment: While Gamba agreed that adopting the Convention in October would be premature, he did not share U.S. concerns. He claimed that there was little chance that any Latin American government would use the Convention to limit free expression or access to information. Foreign Minister Barco and Vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs Giron are in New York for the UNGA and will return to Bogota over the weekend. End Comment.
WOOD